

# LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

OCTOBER  
1990



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## *Healing*

*For Growth in Faith and Mission*

## Cover meditation ♦♦

**S**he lay in the tall grass beside me, soaking up the warm sun. Lucky, one of my cats, was keeping me company as I worked in the garden for the first time this spring. I was sitting on the grass beside her, catching my breath and adjusting to the pain.

For six months I had been struggling with illness which was confounding doctors and testing my limits of endurance. My love of gardening had brought me out on this warm Sunday afternoon to till the vegetable beds and plant seeds and young plants. But the task was proving more difficult than I had anticipated. Movements I had taken for granted now caused pain, and every shovel of dirt I turned caused me to stop and catch my breath. I was getting discouraged, and I wondered if maybe I should abandon the garden this year.

And so we were taking a breather, Lucky and me. I was admiring the sheen of her black coat in the sun when a butterfly landed on a piece of

wood inches from her nose. No one moved. It was a beautiful scene and I longed for my camera. But then the butterfly flitted away and I watched as it moved among the flowers: up and down, this way and that, trying to find the best angle to get the nectar.

I realized that's what I need to do. I need to try "this way and that" until I get just the right angle to do the gardening that I love. And although the pain didn't magically go away, listening to the whisper of God in that moment of beauty, the garden grew and it flourished.

*Creator God, When we become discouraged by the frustrations of living, direct us to the beauty of your creation for creative solutions to our problems. Help us be ever thankful for the healing power of the Holy Spirit and strengthen our faith in the face of adversity. Amen.*

Linda Schomaker  
Des Plaines, Illinois

**ON THE COVER:** Around the world, butterflies are a symbol of hope and resurrection. Watercolor by Sharon Somers, Coralville, Iowa.

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a enjoy Lutheran Woman  
? Help others discover LWT  
e opportunities for growth in  
nd mission the magazine

ee copy of this issue of LWT  
g made available to every  
woman to introduce her to  
magazine and invite her to

participate in her congregation's  
group subscription plan.

Congregations without a group  
subscription plan may request  
courtesy copies of this issue  
(October 1990). Just think of all the  
women new to LWT being greeted  
by the butterflies on the cover and  
messages of God's healing inside!

Congregations wishing to begin  
their new group subscription with  
the January 1991 issue must have  
the subscription list to LWT Circu-  
lation by November 1, 1990. (The  
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To request the free copies and for  
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subscription plan may request the  
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Other helps are available from  
LWT Promotion as well. Check out  
the new "LWT—Linking Women  
Together" poster that was sampled  
in the September 1990 Women of  
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**PROMISES, PROMISES**

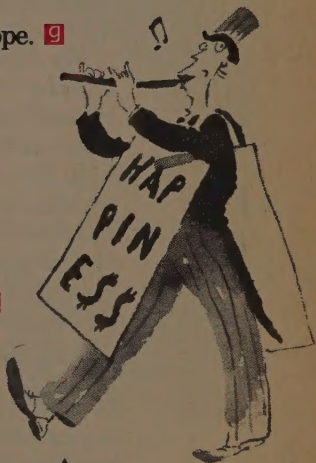
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**GMCs**

*Sonia C. Groenewold*

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# FAITH and HEALING in the New Testament

Nancy Koester

**I** once knew a devout Christian man who had lung cancer. Throughout his illness, he believed that if he had enough faith, God would cure him. His favorite Bible verse was 1 John 3:20, "and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we know that he hears all that we ask of him. And we know that his commandments are to love one another, to love God, and to do what he pleases." "and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we know that he hears all that we ask of him. And we know that his commandments are to love one another, to love God, and to do what he pleases."

My friend certainly did his best to please God, but as months went by and his cancer got worse, he began to blame himself; maybe he was not cured because he had not kept all the commandments or because he had not had enough faith.

In the last months of his illness, this man bore not only physical disease but the weighty conviction that his suffering resulted from lack of faith. So in the weeks before his death, he was deprived of the support that faith could have given him, just when he needed it most.

This man was right in thinking that faith and healing are linked, and right to look to the Scriptures for guidance. But he was wrong to think that faith always results in the cure of disease. By relying on just one verse of the Bible to support his understanding, he missed the perspective and hope that full reading of the Scriptures offers.

In truth, the New Testament provides many perspectives on faith and healing, addressing a wide variety of experiences. Be sure, there are those moments in the New Testament when faith seems to precipitate healing, just as thunder ushers in a rainstorm. For example, in Matthew 9:22 a woman in search of healing touches the hem of Jesus' garment. He tells her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well." In Luke 18:42 Jesus restores a blind man's sight, telling him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."

But faith does not always come before healing in the New Testament. Instead, faith may come *after* healing. For example, in John 9 a blind man who has received his sight comes gradually to faith in Jesus. Faith may come after we realize that God has already done for us.

But not everyone who is healed by Jesus believes in him.



ns to him. In Luke 17, for example, Jesus cleanses 10  
e of leprosy but only one returns to thank him. The other  
show no outward sign of lasting faith in Jesus. And in John  
16 a man whom Jesus healed apparently does not come to  
but instead reports Jesus to the religious authorities be-  
e Jesus has broken the sabbath. These varied accounts  
est that faith can come *before* healing or *after* healing, or  
can be healing *with no faith at all*.

e New Testament also includes stories of faith with no  
ng. In John 11, for example, Lazarus and his sisters Mar-  
and Mary all believe in Jesus, and yet Lazarus is not healed  
disease. He is allowed to die, so that "the Son of God might  
orified" by raising Lazarus. Lazarus does not receive the

ng that he and  
family had hoped  
instead he receives  
rection. His story  
nds us that any  
ical healing we  
ive in this life,  
gh a gift from  
is temporary.

Lazarus had to  
gain, just as all  
ther people whom  
s healed would  
day die. Only in  
resurrection on  
ast day do we re-  
e complete and  
manent healing.

hat does this  
variety of New  
ment stories say  
about faith and  
ng? First, it says

each human story is unique. God does not place upon us  
burden of demonstrating enough faith to heal ourselves or  
ed one. That may sound obvious, but many people seem to  
t that if they could pray more fervently, and believe more  
eheartedly, they or a loved one might be healed. This places  
tra—and unnecessary—burden upon people who already  
enough to bear. God does not wish us to bear such a bur-

cond, the New Testament accounts suggest that there is  
to healing than the cure of a physical ailment. It is possible  
cured and still not be healed, for whoever has health with-  
faith is still fragmented and separated from God.  
e most important thing in the New Testament accounts is



that people believe in Jesus, whether or not they are cure in obvious need of healing. Faith itself is the greatest heal for it banishes the greatest disease of all: unbelief.

Physical cure in the New Testament was not an end in itself but often contributed to the faith of the individuals involved of the larger community. Most important, it manifested God's glory.

Third, healing means more than being well in this life; it means anticipating and receiving the fulfillment which God promised in the future. There can be no wholeness without

perspective of eternity. And it is possible to rejoice in God's promise for the future even when one suffers physically. This has been the experience of many faithful Christians. As Paul wrote, "so we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things

that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Who can say this with Paul has indeed experienced both suffering and healing. ■

*The Rev. Nancy Koester is assistant pastor at St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church, St. Paul, Minnesota. A mother of two, Pastor Koester is also working on her doctor of theology degree at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary. She and her husband, the Rev. Craig Koester, wrote last year's Bible study on the Gospel of John for the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.*



"I have not, little flock, for it is

Luke 12:32 12/100 from Bible

*"your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*



# Never Too Old for the Miraculous

Edgar N. Jackson

Edgar N. Jackson has been a pastor, chaplain, psychotherapist, mental health counselor, and professor. He has written more than 40 books, including: *Understanding Health, Living with the Crises in Life, and The Role of Faith in the Process of Healing*.

One of Edgar Jackson's latest books, *Conquering Disability: What One Counselor Learned from a Stroke* (Augsburg), is his personal story of recovery from a stroke that left him partially paralyzed and unable to talk. Jackson writes in the preface of *Conquering Disability*: "I have had six months to contemplate my disability and to try to come to terms with it. . . . In a sense, my stroke served as a relief, giving me time to think the experience of disability before the final chapter was completed." Jackson dedicates the book to his wife of 55 years, Estelle Jackson, whose devotion played such an important role in his recovery. Find his reflection on pages 8-9. Now 80 years old, Edgar Jackson continues to write, speak and preach. The Jacksons live on a farm in New York, Vermont.—ED.J

**W**ould you like to see something that is truly miraculous? Most people would say yes, for they imagine it would be quite unusual. But, in fact, the miraculous is apt to be quite ordinary.

Take, for an example, our body's ability to heal a wound. The repair and protection processes that take place when we cut our finger are miraculous but ordinary events.

The amazing capability of our God-given bodies to heal was dramatically revealed to me after my stroke. Imagine the miraculous processes needed to heal the brain with its ten thousand million specialized cells!

I remember the first time I tried to use the typewriter after my stroke—it was a disaster. It was as if I had no control of my left arm at all. I thought I was a hopeless case. My therapist said I should just keep at it day by day and I would begin to see improvement. She was right. In the last couple of years I have typed the manuscripts of several books.

Much the same thing was true of my speech. At first there was nothing, and then an incoherent mixture of sounds that made no sense at all. But my therapist would make me speak very slowly and only then did I begin to acquire some mastery of articulation. Slowly and hesitantly at first—some skills taking weeks and some skills taking months—my speech was restored. Now I can preach a whole sermon.

One of the difficult things about being in the middle of healing is adjusting to the timetable of the miraculous. It is a matter of giving the wonderful processes a chance to do all the things that have to be done. We are apt to become impatient,

wanting to impose our own schedule. But God is very patient. When we check with God on a regular basis, it is easier to reconcile the divine schedule with our own.

In the middle of healing, what is happening to us can become all-consuming—we can think we are the center of the universe. We can get things out of proportion, and our perspective is in need of adjusting. One of the best ways to keep things in focus is to make an extra effort to consider other people's points of view.

As we grow older, we may forget that the miraculous keeps on happening. We can be apprehensive about the changes that advancing years may bring. But there is a process at work to make it possible to meet advancing years with skill and wisdom.

There are compensations for getting older. We can take advantage of what we've learned from experience. We don't have to get worked up and excited about nearly as much. The calmness we've learned over time can serve us well in these later days.

Instead of seeing the burden of growing old, we can accept the privileges of advanced years. That best part of life, "for which the first was made" can be understood as a *reward* for the more active stages of existence.

When we are younger, enmeshed in the chores of life, we may have put off attending to the spiritual, the miracu-

*One of the difficult things about being in the middle of healing is adjusting to the timetable of the miraculous*

## Sharing the Miraculous

Estelle M. Jackson

As the date approached for my husband's return home after three months in the habilitation center, I must admit I had misgivings. To go from dependence on a wheelchair to nothing but a cane was cause for apprehension. To go from a staff of trained and skilled specialists to one farmer's wife in her 70s was expecting quite a bit. From a rehab center with every facility to care for injured persons to an acre farm six miles from the nearest village was not reassuring to me. I loved my husband and did not want to take any chances with his recovery.

But the six years have passed beautifully. He has fallen a few times, but he's been taught how to fall without injuring himself. Never did he complain about anything.

We have been closer and shared more since



*we grow older,  
we may forget  
that the  
miraculous  
keeps on  
happening.*

lous, for until we had "more time." And, when the physical activity of our lives slows down, there is more time for meditation and prayer.

The Holy Spirit can use the richness of our memory, and the time we have to reflect, to call us older believers into a full and rich meditative life. Reading the Bible and having the time to stop and reflect on the Word is one of the blessings of maturity.

Living in a body for a long time helps us know its needs and requirements. We can take time to be kind to ourselves and enjoy the miraculous over which we preside.

The same wonders that we have seen through the years are still at work, and we are the bene-

ficiaries of what has been as well as what will be. Yes, we have the chance to share in God's most miraculous gift. When finished with our earthly life, we can lay our wonderful bodies gently aside and enter upon the greater wonder of the life of pure spirit that awaits us. For those who live in Jesus, the most miraculous is yet to come. ■

se than ever before. My husband was a rather  
ate person and was used to doing for himself.  
stroke changed all that. I truly became his  
t arm. He has a positive comment about every  
l and I have the feeling that he is thankful  
ne every hour of every day.

have much help. Our daughter, Lois, is very  
itive and does most of the shopping. While I  
e not missed a day in six years, my husband  
es sure I have my day off, six or eight hours  
oing what I want. Someone else comes in to  
e lunch. Driving through the countryside  
s a new perspective on everything. But I am  
ys glad to get home.

e have been married 55 years and I think the  
few years have been the best. We spend much

together. I've read over 50  
ks to Edgar, and we've  
ed our thinking about them.  
have been thankful for the  
sure of recovery that has  
ours as a refresher course  
ving. The time of prayer and  
itation is rich and reward-  
flavoring all the rest of life.  
ve years have been a privi-  
and we are making the most  
em.



# The Prisoner

A SHORT STORY

Barbara Jurgensen

Julia was having a terrible time getting used to being in the hospital.

"I've never been away from home before," she lamented. "I'm used to seeing neighbors and friends every day."

Added to this was the fact that her doctor had ordered no visitors, radio or TV until further notice. Her "Cubbies" were playing and she couldn't even root for them.

"I'm like a prisoner!" she wailed, half in jest but half in honest expression of the inner pain she was experiencing. "Nobody comes in here and I can't go out."

I knew Julia was a person with great fortitude who firmly believed that her Lord was with her at all times. But somehow, in the hospital, she felt disconnected from her faith.

Then I remembered

a young woman I had passed in the hall on my way to Julia's room. "Is there a nurse with red hair named Patti on this floor?" I asked.

"Yes, Patti comes in every day," she said.

"She's the daughter of some good friends of mine. Did she tell you that she had a stillborn child earlier this year? She's had a rough time."

"Patti lost a baby?" Julia found this hard to believe. "She's always so concerned about me."

Julia was quiet for a long time.

Finally she said, "I've been feeling pretty sorry for myself. I told you that nobody comes in here, but that's wrong! A lot of people come in and out every day—nurses and doctors and others—and some of them probably have a lot more problems than I do."

Again she was quiet. "I thought my ministers were only back among my friends and neighbors, but maybe there are people who come through my room every day are my new friends and neighbors."

The next time I visited Julia she told me about the people she had gotten to know and how they had been sharing concerns with her. The ban was now lifted on watching TV so she was again able to keep up with her Cubs.

"But I'll tell you something," she confided. "Sometimes I'm too busy talking with people to even turn them on." ■

*The Rev. Barbara Jurgensen, Columbus, Ohio, is director of admissions and assistant professor of ministry and contextual education at Tri Lutheran Seminary.*



# The Miracle in Ethiopia



Carol J. Birkland

ing down from a small twin-  
ned Ethiopian Airlines plane, it  
ard to believe that anyone could  
bly be threatened with starva-  
in this country. Thousands of  
below, vast areas of neatly divid-  
ections of green indicate that  
-working Ethiopian farmers are  
ing life from the soil.

at I have heard different reports.  
January I heard that farther  
1 in northern Wollo and Tigray  
inces the terrain looks like the  
scape of the moon. These areas  
had fewer than six days of rain  
e past year; and there looms the  
re of another terrible famine  
hat of 1984-85, when as many  
e million Ethiopians perished.

at there is a miracle taking place  
e Ethiopian town of Dessie, al-  
e 8000 feet, in north-central  
opia. When I first heard about  
miracle it was nothing more  
a hope. Five months later, in  
I flew from Addis  
a to Dessie to see  
yself.

1984-85, the Ethi-  
government did  
ttle too late. Even-  
y there was an out-  
ng of international  
ne full day of New  
and London rock

concerts, and the now-famous "We  
Are the World" song.

The present crisis in Ethiopia is a  
result of weather, but also a result of  
warfare. For more than eight years,  
a rebel group called the Tigray Peo-  
ple's Liberation Front (TPLF) has  
been trying to overthrow the govern-  
ment of Ethiopian leader Mengistu  
Haile Mariam, who inherited the  
leadership after Emperor Haile Se-  
lassie was overthrown in 1975. Re-  
cently, the TPLF has managed to  
capture much of the area now threat-  
ened by famine. The question is: how  
can relief supplies reach those in  
need who live to the north of the civil  
war front?

In January I learned that Ato  
Francis Stephanos, president of the  
Ethiopian Evangelical Church  
Mekane Yesus (Lutheran), had de-  
cided to approach other Christian  
community leaders in Ethiopia—the  
Orthodox and Roman Catholics—

**T**he plan to deliver food  
through the war zone was  
miraculous in itself, for the  
three churches had never  
cooperated so closely before.

**A**to Aklilu Dufera, left, is a JRP coordinator.



with the idea that the Christian churches be responsible for delivering relief supplies to those in need.

This plan was miraculous in itself, for the three churches had never co-operated so closely before. Even given a new willingness for a bold ecumenical effort, fundamental questions remained: How could three churches devise a workable plan? How could food be transported through a war zone?

United under the name, Joint Relief Partnership (JRP), the churches presented their plan to the Ethiopian government; and after extended negotiations, the government lent its support.

But the miracle was only halfway realized. A delegation from the three churches traveled to Khartoum, Sudan, to meet with the TPLF leadership to secure their approval as well. After days of equally difficult negotiations, the green light was given.

The task facing the Joint Relief Partnership was immense. Perhaps 200,000 people in North Wollo and 800,000 in Tigray needed to be fed.

To accomplish this, the JRP would have to transport 15,000 metric tons (33 million pounds) of food per month.

On March 20, 1990, the first JRP convoy left Dessie for the north. This was the time to test the agreement between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF. Would the JRP's neutrality be honored by both sides?

Indeed it was honored, and basic needed stocks of food were delivered to Kobo in southern Tigray.

When my plane landed near Dessie, I was met by Ato Aklilu Dufera, one of the three coordinators of JRP Dessie operation. As in all distribution areas further north, the three churches share responsibilities. In Dessie the Mekane Ye Church (Lutheran) handles administration and finance, the Orthodox handles the storage facilities, and the Roman Catholics handle the logistics and transportation.

The difficulties faced by the churches in assuming such a responsibility are immense. Grain from large government donors such as



ted States Agency for International Development (USAID) and European Economic Community shipped to the port of Asab, then trucked about 300 miles to Dessie. There it is reloaded onto JRP trucks for the trip north.

About 20 miles outside of Dessie, JRP convoys cross "No Man's Land" between the Ethiopian army and the TPLF forces. During this time they have nothing but the JRP flag and the neutrality it represents to protect them.

After negotiating their way through two checkpoints, the drivers have to face 200 miles of mountain passes on roads that, in some places, have almost washed away. One bridge is completely destroyed, so the drivers ford the stream that will become a river when the rains begin in

June. The other bridge has suffered war damage, is cracked and totally unsafe. Yet the drivers pull their 30-ton cargoes across it anyway.

I had heard that because of these difficulties, the JRP was using only smaller trucks, not the large double trailers provided by the United Nations World Food Program. When I asked Francis Stephanos about this he said, "Now we are using every truck we can get."

"Are the roads getting better?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "the drivers are just getting more courageous."

The JRP operation in Dessie is indeed a miracle, a miracle that depends on the generosity and energy of hundreds of people. More grain and trucks are needed. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**T**he JRP symbol on its trucks and drivers is a recognized symbol of neutrality in "No Man's Land."





**A** convoy loaded and ready to depart Mekele.

has given a grant of \$200,000 from the World Hunger Program's Emergency Response Fund, but more is needed. [Another \$200,000 from the fund went to Lutheran World Relief's cross-border operation from Sudan.] The Lutheran World Federation has challenged its member churches around the world to provide almost two million dollars to support the JRP.

As I write this article in May, everyone is hoping that rain will come in June and July. If it does, farmers will be able to plant in July and harvest in September, and the JRP could be out of business by December. Nobody in the JRP wants to think what might happen if the rains do not come.

At the airport I shake Ato Aklilu's hand. We promise to remember each other in prayer and I tell him, "I may be back here again in January, and as much as I'd like to see you again, I hope I don't." He nods in agreement, climbs into his truck with the JRP insignia on the doors and heads

back to his office, where another convoy is ready to depart. ■


*Carol J. Birkland is secretary for Middle East and East Africa, in the ELCA Division for Global Missions.*

## UPDATE

The Joint Relief Partnership began air-lifting food on June 20. So far, JRP flights have delivered food from Addis Ababa to the Eritrean city of Asmara. Because of war, the situation in the Eritrean is the most critical and more food is needed there.

While rains have not come to Wollo and Tigre, the JRP's careful planning has paid off. By early July, more than 19,000 metric tons of food had been delivered to the seven JRP distribution centers and those in need were being fed. The condition of the roads has also improved. Two pontoon bridges have been stalled at Wergessa and Weld, making the trip somewhat easier for the truck drivers.





# Whole *healing*

Florence Stroebe Kahn

**H**ealing is a powerful word. As a nurse, I once understood healing to mean "to be well or healthy again or to cure disease . . . to rid of a wound." That definition was tested for me 16 years later, when, as I was waiting for a stop to change, I was rear-ended . . . instantly broke my neck. I woke in the emergency room as traction were being placed in my skull. Without any deep understanding of what it meant, I said, "There goes my life." What was my life? What kind of healing would I need to be made well?


I had known until this time about physical healing, but this tragedy affected me in all ways: physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. I was paralyzed. I could no longer walk, grasp with my fingers or use my body. There was no need for a miracle! I knew Jesus had performed many great miracles of physical healing . . . the leper, the lame, the blind man. Yes, miracles can still happen today, and I needed an instant return to well-

ness. In healing, I learned, involves more than a physical cure. My independence and ability were ripped away and I wasn't fully healed, I had no idea

what the path to wholeness was. I had no idea how to begin a different kind of healing. I had no idea I was to face a healing process that was harder and deeper, one that involved my whole being.

*What kind  
of healing*

*would I need to  
be made well?*



Looking back now I understand that part of the healing process was grieving for my losses. I was in shock for awhile and remembered very little at the time. Then, as the losses loomed up one by one through the numbness, I couldn't face the heavy feelings of sadness . . . anger . . . anxiety . . . helplessness. I pushed everything down inside to "hold myself together." My husband, family and some friends didn't know what to say or do as I struggled along. They cared and supported me by being alongside me without a formula of perfect words or actions.

After a long time, I was helped to work through the depression that

was exacerbated by my buried feelings. Eventually a counselor provided me gentleness and a safe place where I could fall apart, talking and crying about my immobile body, my subsequent divorce and more.

With the "letting go" came new energy and an inner understanding: I was still a valuable, worthwhile person. I wasn't a pair of hands, or a singing voice, I was a *whole person* . . . sitting in a wheelchair! Through loss and pain there can be letting go, growth, and healing.

There was still the deeper spiritual level of healing that I needed to experience. How did my injury and life-change affect me spiritually? Where was God in all this and where was I? Caring people alongside me during the healing process provided strength and encouragement. They were God's resources for me! But what about my inner spiritual resources for healing? This part of my healing was the most significant and yet, it was the hardest to address and express.


When my soul felt agony, I couldn't

even cry out to God. A friend asked "How are you doing spiritually in all that has happened to you?"

I said, "Just fine!" But I wasn't. That started a real, honest dialog about my relationship with Christ and how I could know Jesus better. I am still in that dialog with others and the Holy Spirit in me. Deep healing had begun, and the things I knew about God in my head finally made a profound journey to my heart!

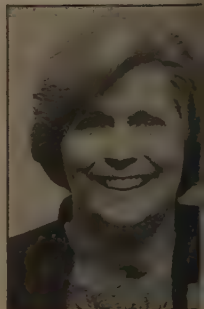
I had filled my life with things that were of value to me, but Christ tells us, "My grace is sufficient for you" (1 Corinthians 12:9, New International Version). My life had been managed and controlled by an independent body, but my strength is not in that. Christ tells us, "my power is made perfect in weakness" (v. 9). The deepest healing that God allows through suffering is discovering these truths in a real way!

It is not my body and its performance in life that matters. What matters is Christ in me making me even more whole and more effective as a child of God. That is life! That is powerful! That is healing! ■



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*Florence Stroebe Kahn, Plymouth, Minnesota, is a nursing educator and speaker on growing through adversity and living with a disability. She serves on the Christian Council on Persons with Disabilities to help bridge the gap between the church and disabled persons.*





# Healing as a Service

Faye R. Coddling

She had seen it listed as she scanned the weekly calendar in the bulletin: Healing Service, 7:30 P.M. Tuesday. Certainly there was no reason for her to attend. She wasn't sick or dying, nor were her family or friends. Yet she felt she was suffering: an unsettled marriage, a stressful schedule, concerns about what she should be doing with her life, a certain uncomfortableness that had been there for a long, long time.

Like other people in her community, her friends, neighbors and the people of the church would probably never understand the pain of her "dis-ease with life." Certainly she acted like the rest of the community. She knew that when she looked around church on Sunday morning during the sharing of the peace, she could see broken marriages that appeared whole, divorced people who appeared to be together and parents who sat physically close to estranged children. She, too, must have appeared "nor-

mal" to them. It had struck her one day how strange the word normal is in this context—*normal* really means to pretend, not to share, at least not too much.

I am pastor to the woman I've just described, and I struggle daily to find the right way to tell her and others about God's healing power; the right way to say that her dis-ease with life is but one of the many diseases God's creation suffers. On many days she can be like any one of us, including myself. She is not *sick* as the world defines sickness, but she is not *whole* as God intends wholeness for us.

Jesus healed as part of his ministry. Christ's actions of healing came in many forms: forgiveness of sins, casting out demons, laying on of hands, anointing the sick with oil.

Jesus came not only to save souls for the world beyond, but to transform *this* life into a new reality of abundant life—wholeness (see John 10:10b). Christ's message of healing means becoming sane and sound

**Christ's actions of healing came in many forms:**  
**forgiveness of sins,**  
**casting out demons,**  
**laying on of hands,**  
**anointing the sick.**

**"I lay my hands upon you in the name of our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ, . . . that you may  
know the healing power of his love."**

and whole, bringing together our spiritual, physical and emotional needs. Jesus is the great physician because he possesses the power to heal the whole person.

The Lutheran book of *Occasional Services* contains a healing service for congregations. It is a service that can help the healing process in many situations. Congregations may use it, for instance, to help their own healing as a community after conflict, or at the leaving of a beloved leader. Most often, though, the service is used to gather together for prayer those individuals who are in need of healing. It is a moving service filled with the rich promises of God's loving power.

This service for healing offers help for all kinds of dis-eases of life: physical illness, divorce, infertility, estrangement, disappointment, loneliness, loss, unemployment and questions in life that never seem to be fully answered. It is a service that asks for God's gift of abundant life through prayer.

The community gathers together and prays for all those who suffer, for those who minister in healing, for the ministry of family and friends, for those making decisions, and for those in affliction. After scripture and prayer, those who wish to receive the laying on of hands may come to the altar and have, in essence, God's words touch them, as the minister touches each person's forehead and prays.

The service reminds me of Holy Communion, without wafer and

wine. As I gently touch each person's forehead in the service, I hear in my head the words "broken for you, for you the broken, the dis-eased—God who heals." In my own most sorrowful moments I have heard the comforting words of the service Laying on of Hands and Anointing the Sick: "I lay my hands upon you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, beseeching him to uphold you and fill you with grace, that you may know the healing power of his love."

The healing power of God's love for the dis-ease of life, for the "normal," for the afflicted. The Christian church through this service can claim the power of Christ's healing. We can claim the abundant life Jesus wants for us. We can comfort the uncomfortable, help mend broken hearts, call on God's love in the midst of abandonment and be upheld and filled with God's grace.

Healing Service, Tuesday 7: P.M. Certainly she should be there

*The Rev. Faye Coddling has led and participated in healing services in a variety of parish and hospital settings. She currently serves Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Schaumburg, Illinois, as part of a three-person pastoral team. She lives happily with her cat, Hauge.*





# Women: *healing*



Terry Bowes

It is a mother's worst nightmare: your child is dead. She has taken her own life. This nightmare became my reality in February 1988 when I heard that my daughter Stephanie, a 20-year-old college sophomore, had taken her own life.

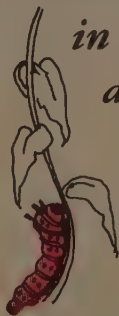
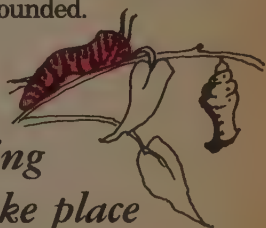
I remember one day following Stephanie's funeral when I felt such tremendous chest pains that I sat down and concentrated on my breathing, certain that each breath would be my last. I thought with relief, "I'm having a heart attack. Thank God, I won't have to live with this." When an hour passed and I was still alive, I realized I hadn't suffered a heart attack. I was experiencing the very real sensation of a broken heart.

When devastating events take place in our lives, we are brought face to face with the fragileness of being human. When the sheer act of surviving seems impossible, the idea of healing is incomprehensible. In these times, we discover that healing often comes through God's caring people. They lift us up and urge us to the next breath, the next step, the next day.

As compassionate people, we all want to be agents of healing, but we often feel helpless and immobilized in the face of a friend's tragic loss. What should we say? What should we do?

We are afraid that by doing or saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, we might make matters even worse. I personally found, however, that expressions of love and sympathy are always welcome. We can trust in our calling to act in Christ's behalf in tending to the wounded.

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Lutherans make wonderful healers, because we are an Easter people. Our theology of God's grace and mercy offers a solid foundation to the grieving when life has turned to sand. I have never been told by my church that God judges either Stephanie or me harshly because she took her own life. I have not been told that God willed her death. Instead, I

hear that God weeps with me over Stephanie's decision. I hear about a God who stood next to her and argued with her, then forgave her and took her in loving arms. I heard that terrible things happen to God's faithful people because we sometimes make awful errors in judgment with our God-given gift of free will. Yet, in the end, the true will of God will triumph because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are particularly gifted at healing, because we understand how one woman's soul can touch the soul of a sister. The words and deeds of sisters in faith have been powerful healing touches for me in the two years since Stephanie died.

My first smile following Stephanie's death came with the arrival of a package from my friend Linda. She had participated with me in a global exchange of Lutheran women to the Eastern Bloc countries two years before. Linda had remembered that about three weeks into our pilgrim-

age, I had had an insatiable craving for chocolate-chip cookies. In the box were a dozen chocolate-chip cookies.

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My dear friend Margaret and I share a love of books and music. After Stephanie's death, Margaret filled my mailbox with books about grieving, healing, and suicide. I was moved by her expression of friendship as I opened each new book and found sections highlighted and noted in the margins. Margaret had read the books first and marked passages she wanted to share with me!

I thank God for the friends who listened patiently to my litany of pain and loss. I know that that was not easy. I thank God for those who lifted me up when the guilt of Stephanie's death threatened to crush me. I thank God for the healers around me who affirmed me as a person and a mother.

Women pray well for one another. Sometimes heaven must ring with the sound of their persistent petitions. While prayers could not bring



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My daughter back to me, they did give me back my own life. Many times I experienced a sudden resurgence of energy when I was at my deepest lows. Later, a card would arrive from a friend saying, "I am praying for you."

Corinne Chilstrom, herself the survivor of a child's suicide, wrote, "I pray for you every morning on my intercede." What a blessing it is to know that prayers are being lifted up for your behalf.

Women healers point out signs of hope to the grieving, even as they listen, comfort and pray. When I felt that resigning as president of the Rocky Mountain Synodical Women's Organization was the wisest decision, both personally and for the good of the women's organization, I found that no one would accept my resignation. At the same time, other board members quietly assumed tasks for me. They were subtle and sensitive, asking me for advice and approval even as they acted for me when I could not function. They nudged me back into life by gradually returning to me the responsibilities of living.

Healers understand the importance of symbols in the healing process. For Stephanie's funeral, we chose a bulletin cover with a butterfly on it. Our pastor referred to the symbolism of the butterfly as it reflects our faith in the resurrection and said, "Stephanie is now a butterfly." That sentence had a profound impact on Stephanie's friends, who could easily picture her in bright, vivid colors, swooping and soaring through eternity. Soon they were sending me butterflies on cards, pictures and knickknacks.



*The  
symbol of  
the butterfly  
reflects our faith  
in the resurrection.*

My friends quickly learned of my newfound love for butterflies. At the first convention of the Rocky Mountain Synodical Women's Organization, as I stood at the podium still sick at heart with grief and questioning my ability to preside, I looked out at a sea of butterflies! Women were wearing butterfly pins, butterfly earrings, butterfly belt buckles. They lifted up my symbol as a silent token of love and support and healing. I am healed every time someone says, "I saw a butterfly, and it made me think of you." ■

*Terry Bowes of Longmont, Colorado, is president of the Rocky Mountain Synodical Women's Organization. Married with two college-aged children, Terry raises quarterhorses with her family. Since her daughter Stephanie's suicide, Terry has spoken and written on suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.*





## 10

Kindred  
Spirits

Study Text: Luke 1:39-45, 56

Phyllis N. Kersten and E. Louise William

"I don't know how I would have made it through the year since my husband died without the grief support group at church."

"Overeaters Anonymous changed my life. I finally found people who could help me sort out the choices I was making for myself."

"The children are all in school, and I wanted to go back to work. My friends encouraged me to apply for some very responsible jobs. I wouldn't have thought I was capable without their help."

"It's not easy to raise a child with disabilities, but there are joys, too. The parents group is a place where I can tell it all—just like it is. I feel accepted and understood."

"I thought I was crazy until I went to an Adult Children of Alcoholics group. There I found a lot of people who had experiences just like mine."

Testimonials like these are common from people who have been part of support groups. Perhaps you have a similar story to tell.

Why do you think these groups work so well?

Perhaps it is because these groups—like many relationships in which people find friendship and community—call forth something deep within human beings: something at the heart of the way God created us—not to be alone. (See Genesis 2:18.)

**JOURNEYING THROUGH THE WORD**

**Traveling, waiting, pondering**

Read Luke 1:39-40.

Mary went "with haste." These words are often interpreted to mean that Mary was obedient, responding quickly to the message of the angel. (La





er on in Luke 2:16, the shepherds go to Bethlehem “with haste.” And in Matthew’s gospel the women return from the tomb “with haste” to tell the disciples that Jesus has been raised from the dead [Matthew 28:8].) The Greek words in this text can also be translated as “with serious intent” or “very thoughtfully.”

The journey from Nazareth in Galilee to a city in the Judean hill country would have taken several days.

What do you think Mary might have thought about she traveled? What might have been some of her hopes and fears, doubts and dreams?

The woman waiting in Zechariah’s house was Elizabeth. Familiarize yourself with her story by reading Luke 1:5-25. The annunciation of the birth of John follows the same pattern mentioned in Session 9. (See the September 1990 *Lutheran Woman Today*.)

2. What did it mean for a woman to be childless in biblical times? How did Elizabeth understand her barrenness? (See Luke 1:25.) Recall some other biblical women who were barren. What similar and/or different perspectives do people have today about a person without children?

3. What do you think was going on in Elizabeth’s mind and heart during her five months of seclusion?

4. How do you think Mary and Elizabeth were different? How were they alike? What brought them together?

### **Greeting, connecting, sharing**

Read Luke 1:41-45.

In the sixth month of pregnancy, it’s not uncommon to feel movement in the womb. But Elizabeth’s baby did more than move around and kick a little. He leapt for joy, the Bible says. This leaping implies a kind of exultant dance before God who liberates—much like David’s dance for joy as the Ark of the

Covenant is brought into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:16). In the Old Testament leaping for joy is one of the pictures of the long-awaited age when the promised Messiah comes to deliver and save. The lame leap in Isaiah 35:6, and in Psalm 114:6 at creation, even the hills and mountains, skip like animals. Even before he is born, John is the prophet pointing to Jesus, not yet born, who will usher in the new age of salvation. In Mary's visit, the angel's message to Zechariah (see Luke 1:15-17) is confirmed.

**5** Have you ever experienced a time when you "met Jesus,"—perhaps hidden or not yet fully formed—in someone else, and that encounter caused you to leap for joy? If so, describe that event.

Has another person's leaping for joy ever been a kind of prophetic act for you—pointing the way to the God who liberates and saves? If so, describe that event.



■ Elizabeth herself was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with a loud voice of unrestrained joy. This, too, is a sign of the new age when the Messiah comes to fulfill all God's promises. (See Psalm 66:1 and Isaiah 40:9.) Elizabeth's greeting in verses 41-45 and following—some call it a short song—echoes Old Testament themes about the fulfillment of God's promises.

In Judges 5:24, Deborah calls Jael "blessed among women" and in the apocryphal book of Judith, Judith is praised in the same way (13:18). These ancient stories may seem violent to us, for both Jael and Judith killed powerful leaders who were enemies of God's people. Their similarity with Mary, of course, is not in the violence but in the fact that, through them, powerful enemies are overcome.

Mary's blessedness is not simply personal; it is also because she has a role in God's plan that will affect all people. She is to be the mother of the "Son of the Most High."

Through the ages, as it formulated doctrine and decided what kind of language to use in talking of Mary's son, the church has also made decisions about how to talk about Mary. The church convened councils to discuss and debate, and finally to decide, how to talk about the fact that Jesus Christ was both divine and human. The Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 (where our Nicene Creed originated) and the Council of Constantinople in 381 established the doctrine of the full deity of Christ. It seemed to follow, then, that Mary should be called "Mother of God" or "Bearer of God." The Greek word used





*theotokos*, *theo* meaning “god,” *tokos* meaning “bearer.” This ancient doctrine about Mary was reaffirmed in the Lutheran Formula of Concord in 1577. “We believe, teach, and confess that Mary conceived and bore not a plain, ordinary, mere man but the veritable Son of God; for this reason she is rightly called, and truly is, the Mother of God.”

From *The Book of Concord*, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert. Copyright © 1959 Fortress Press.

Mary, Mother of God, has been very important in the prayer, devotional life, and piety of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians. Perhaps you have seen Orthodox icons (pictures used in devotions) of Mary, the God-Bearer.

What do you think when you hear Mary described Mother of God or God-Bearer? Does such a title help you feel closer to her, or does it create a sense of distance?



■ Elizabeth could feel the life of her child in her womb. Until this point Mary had only the word of the angel on which to depend. Now in Elizabeth's greeting of praise that message was confirmed. As unlikely as it may seem, Mary was pregnant with the life of God and would bear that life for others. (In Session 11 we will look more closely at Mary's response.)

In coming together, Mary and Elizabeth both began to express the great thing God was doing in them. Just as God first created people not to be alone, so in the new age of fulfillment beginning in Jesus, people are not to be isolated, but rather are brought together in friendship, companionship, and community. In a sense, others become for us “God-bearers” (with a small “b”) when they encourage the life of God we feel stirring in us; when they share our joys and sorrows, hopes and fears; when they bear our burdens and heavy responsibilities; when they become companions on our journey.

Can you recall a time when you felt the life or Spirit of God stirring in you, or felt that God was calling you to do some unlikely thing? If so, how was that new life affirmed and encouraged?

8

Are there people who have been “God-bearers” for you through their friendship, companionship, and community? Do you think you have ever been a “God-bearer” for someone else? If so, tell about those times and people.

### Blessed disciple

Elizabeth sees Mary’s blessedness not just in her being the physical mother of Jesus, but also in her being one who hears and keeps the word of God. In Session 9 we saw Mary as the first disciple. Look again at Luke 8:21; 8:15 and 11:27-28.

9

How does Luke describe a good disciple? In what ways is Mary a good disciple? How do you think Elizabeth and Mary might have encouraged each other in their discipleship?

### COMPANIONS IN DEED

Can you list women in our world today who especially need friendship and community so that a new life and spirit can grow in them? Is there any way you, individually or as a group, can become a “kinswoman” to one or more of them? Consider how you might express friendship and the spirit of Christ in community with them.

### COMPANIONS IN PRAYER AND PRAISE

Think again about what Mary and Elizabeth shared, what you share with others in your group, and what you have potential to share with some new kinswoman. Offer a silent prayer of thanks to God.

Pray together the prayer for “The Visitation,” on page 33 of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, and sing together LBW 86, “Only Son from Heaven.”

### JOURNEYING ON

Next session we’ll be studying Mary’s song, the “Magnificat,” and see how that song joins God’s people—past, present and future—with each other and with Mary’s son, Jesus, who ushers in the new age of salvation.

In the coming weeks, try to find as many versions of Mary’s song as you can to listen to and sing.

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# Sally Was Shalom

Margaret Wold

I was totally unprepared for a "shalom woman" like Sally. You see, I had written a book by that name ten years before I met her and, in it, I had defined a "shalom woman" as being "any woman who will not settle for being less than God has called her to be."

I have to confess that when I wrote the book, I thought a "shalom woman" was someone less like Sally and more like Deborah, the judge and prophet of Judges 4; the super wife and mother of Proverbs 31; and the Virgin Mary of the magnificat (Luke 1)—all conceived and formed into one splendidly "whole" (shalom) creature!

When the hospice volunteer coordinator called the week before Thanksgiving to tell me that Sally was my new patient, she said, "Sally will probably die before Christmas. Sally," she went on, "is 35 years old and has cervical cancer. Because the cancer caused a bowel obstruction, she has a colostomy. Her bladder had to be removed, so she also has a nephrotomy and she's on continuous morphine for her pain. She lives alone with her 15-year-old son, because her husband left her when she got sick."

I found Sally's apartment tucked away in a hallway so dark that I had to "read" the number with my fingers. I gave the door a timid knock. First visits were always hard for me.

"The door's open. Come on in," a musical voice called out. I pushed the door open and a bird swooped down from somewhere, landed on my shoulder and pecked enthusiastically at my ear-ring.

A slender woman, fully clothed in jeans and a bright blue blouse, called to the bird from a cot in a corner of the tiny living room. "Tasha! Leave Marge alone! Hi, Marge, I'm Sally. Help yourself to some pop in the fridge," she said as Tasha flew



across the room to perch on her finger.

Previous experience had led me to expect that my patients would be emaciated, heavily medicated, and seldom awake. They certainly would not look like Sally. Big, brown, heavily lashed eyes looked laughingly at me out of a delicately featured face, framed in long black hair.

Instead of my usual carefully structured introductory visit, I stayed an hour and a half and learned that Sally's history included an abusive mother, a series of "uncles," a stepfather who raped and beat her and her two sisters, forcing them to make their own way on the beaches and streets of Los Angeles. Her young adult life had consisted of a series of men who took her in, cast her out, married her and divorced her. Yet somehow she managed to get a cosmetology license and a business college education.

Her cancer was misdiagnosed as a cervical infection and went untreated for two years. By the time it had metastasized into her bones and other organs.

Contrary to popular opinion, Sally did not die before Christmas; she lived until the next August. During the nine months that I was with her, she radically altered my previous understanding of shalom-wholeness and also of the Christ who is our shalom.

Sally had become a Christian just six months before we met; when she learned that my husband was the pastor of a church, she insisted on being brought every week to our Lenten soup and remembrance gatherings.

She seemed to experience a profound identification with Jesus in his journey to the cross. In him, she was determined not to give in to suffering without a Gethsemane struggle against it. At the same time she also spoke freely of her immortality and inescapable death. Only after her death did it occur to me that she lived in the reality of the "here-but-not-yet reign of God." For her the joy of kingdom was *now* as well as *later*.

Instead of dying before Christmas, Sally went out dancing on New Year's Eve with her homemaker nurse and her nurse's fiancé. In March her friends invited her to go to Mexico. She lay in the back of their station wagon and came back with inexpensive gifts for all of us. Two weeks before she died she used her last disability check to re-



Sally radically altered my previous understanding of shalom-wholeness and also of the Christ who is our shalom.

ate limousine to take her friends out to dinner. Between radiation treatments for terrifying pain and emergency trips to the county hospital where she was hemorrhaging, Sally bred, raised and gave away dozens of pet birds. She was training a new puppy in the months before her death. In the spring she helped her plant a vegetable garden in the six square feet of patio soil behind her apartment. It reminded her of Luther's comment that if he knew the world were going to end tomorrow, he'd go out and plant an apple tree.

Sally never blamed God for the evil humans had done to her. If evil is anything we do that hurts mind, body or spirit, then many people had conspired to "kill" Sally—her parents who abused her, all of the men who used her, the doctor who misdiagnosed her for the wrong disease, and even the passengers on a plane who complained of her "stink" and who tried to get her removed before takeoff.

Sally, as a participant in the shalom of God, understood that shalom persons are called to mend the fabric of lives torn apart by evil and to make them whole again. Sally's childhood, her relationships, her poverty, her illness all called her to brokenness and alienation, but the beauty of shalom was in its refusal to accept brokenness as God's final definition.

Jesus Christ, broken on the cross, invites us into wholeness. In our weakness, God is made strong. Because of the brokenness of the cross, Jesus became our wholeness. I who thought myself whole learned the meaning of wholeness from one who thought herself broken.

Sally was shalom to me. ■

Adapted from *Great God of Love* by Margaret and Erling Wold. Copyright © 1987 Augsburg Publishing House.

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Like Jesus, Sally was determined not to give in to suffering without a Gethsemane struggle against it.



# Touch and Grow:

## Healing Ourselves, Healing Others

Julie Dennison

Sunday morning worship. Time to pass the peace. People touch one another with handshakes and hugs. Human touch is as natural to people of faith as breathing. Or is it?

Remember how uncomfortable many congregations once were with touching during the passing of the peace? Why is it that so many Lutherans are "touchy" about touch?

Many reasons. Those of us of Scandinavian or Germanic backgrounds generally touch less than other ethnic groups. Also our society, and often the church, confuses tactile contact with sexual contact. For some, experiences of touch may have been negative, such as spankings, or even sexual abuse.

Yet we all need to touch and be touched. Touching reassures and comforts. Touch gives life. It's been shown that without enough skin contact, babies waste away and die.

Currently many health-care professionals are coming to recognize the power of touch in healing. In the



faith community, there is a vast, untapped potential for ministry with touch.

The biblical foundation for the healing power of touch is Jesus' own healing ministry. Jesus' use of touch was extensive; of 41 healing stories in the gospels, 16 involve touch. One vivid example is the healing of Jairus's daughter. "But Jesus took her by the hand and called out, 'Get up, child!'" (Luke 8:54, Today's English Version).

In Christian history, the "laying on of hands" has been important in both the consecration for pastoral ministry and the tradition of faith healing. Touch indeed enhances healing. The recent resurgence of touch as therapy compels us to reclaim our own healing history with touch and reflect on how increasing touch awareness and therapies may deepen ministry.

Touching, and being touched, p



n touch" with the earth, God's  
ion. Many modern people "live  
eir heads" and have lost connec-  
not only with their bodies and  
ion, but with their deepest spir-  
ity as well. The experience of  
nonsexual, nurturing touch can  
rate and balance our lives spir-  
itally, mentally, and physically.

uch therapies include both  
ern and Eastern philosophies  
techniques. Probably the best-  
n Western massage is Swedish  
age, which involves stroking  
kneading. A popular Eastern  
py is *shiatsu*, a massage which  
finger and elbow pressure to  
nce the body's energy. Books and  
shops offer detailed in-  
ctions of these tech-  
es, as well as other  
ical touch therapies.

uch therapies not only  
ulate wellness, but they  
personal growth as  
After one touch work-  
a mother and daugh-  
talked frankly for hours  
t early experiences. An-  
r woman faced her  
hood sexual abuse and  
n a path to healing.

y husbands and wives have re-  
vered delight in one another.  
st of all, touch therapies raise  
reness of the importance of  
n in our ministry in daily life.  
h therapies encourage us to  
pat, stroke and rub our families  
oved ones more. In conversation  
eel comfortable touching our  
d's arm, back or shoulder. At the  
ital or care center, we feel free  
roke tenderly someone's face,  
their forehead, ruffle their hair  
b their hands and feet. For ex-  
e, after giving my father-in-law,  
as Alzheimer's disease, a basic

face and foot massage, he often falls  
peacefully asleep.

Increased touching may feel awk-  
ward at first. And sensitivity to other  
people is always necessary. We must  
never touch others to assert power,  
or to meet only our own needs. We  
touch because, imitating Jesus, we  
want to show love and care in a con-  
crete way.

Touching in ministry will come  
more naturally and spontaneously  
when we recall the biblical founda-  
tion of Jesus' ministry of touch, re-  
claim our rich tradition of the "laying  
on of hands" in healing and use the  
resources of today's touch thera-  
pies—to reach out and touch.

*In the faith  
community, there is  
a vast, untapped  
potential for  
ministry with touch.*

*The Rev. Julie Dennison, a former  
missionary in Africa, is a mother of  
four who is working on a doctorate in  
theology and ethics at the University  
of Iowa. Also a li-  
censed massage  
therapist, Pastor  
Dennison previ-  
ously served at  
St. Stephen's Lu-  
theran Church  
in Cedar Rapids,  
Iowa.*



# The Healing Ministries of the Church

Sally Camp

“Are you a nurse?”

This is the question many people ask when they learn that I am the director of health, healing and health care ministries in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. No, I am not a nurse, and I have no medical training. But the question and answer point up some important aspects of this ministry for the church.

First, when people in North America think of health, they usually think of medical personnel: doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, and physical therapists. After all, it is these trained, dedicated people who offer us one of the most technologically advanced medical-care systems in the world. Of the 300 social ministry organizations affiliated with the ELCA, the largest number are nursing homes, and many of the

ELCA-affiliated organizations with the largest budgets and the biggest staffs are hospitals.

But there is more to health than medicine or medical care, and one of the goals of the ELCA's health and healing position is to help those of us in the church broaden our definition of health.

## **A Healing Tradition**

The gospels tell us many stories of Jesus healing the sick—there are 23 in Luke alone—and we read that “great multitudes gathered to be healed and to be healed of their infirmities” (Luke 5:15). The story of healing continues in Acts, where we find stories of the apostles healing “many who were paralyzed or lame” (Acts 8:6-7).

In James 5:15 we read that “prayer made in faith will heal the sick.”

---

One of the goals of the  
ELCA's health and healing position  
is to help those of us in the church  
broaden our definition of health.

The church is one place where the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual needs of people can be addressed at one time.

---

person . . ." (Today's English  
ion).  
nce biblical times, the church  
continued to be involved with  
ing: most hospitals were origi-  
founded and run by religious  
rs. However, as hospital build-  
were constructed, a distinction  
n to appear between physical  
spiritual care, our bodies being  
ed to by physicians and nurses,  
our souls being tended to by min-  
s of the church. The functions of  
g and healing became separat-  
a way that they were not in the  
of Jesus.

### Deeper Connection

the fact that people ask me  
t my medical background tells  
hat they don't find it strange  
the church would seek out a  
e to work from the churchwide  
, and that they see, and want,  
eper connection between the  
and the spirit.

part of my position, I encourage  
ministry organizations, syn-  
nd congregations to explore the  
ditional healing role of the  
h, and to nurture that tradi-  
role in our modern organiza-  
and congregations. The church  
e place where the physical, in-  
tual, emotional, social and spir-  
needs of people can be ad-  
ed at one time. As members of  
gregation experience the whole-  
of such an approach, they are  
led to reach out to their com-

munities to share that wholeness  
with others, through specific acts of  
ministry.

But the difference between heal-  
ing and curing, especially in this  
technological age, needs to be ex-  
amined. We have grown to expect  
that medicine will always cure our  
bodies, no matter how we have failed  
to care for ourselves. Such reliance  
on medicine—and the expectation of  
medical miracles—tends, however,  
to mask the power of emotional and  
spiritual healing offered by the  
church. Nowhere is this brought  
home more forcefully than when we,  
or someone we know, cannot be  
cured medically, yet still encounters  
healing.

Jesus said that he came so that we  
"might have life—life in all its full-  
ness" (John 10:10, TEV). Life abun-  
dant, and the healing powers of God,  
are ours to claim as the followers of  
Jesus and members of his church.  
The church, through its people and  
its institutions, possesses the power,  
from God, to help healing happen. ■

*Prior to her present position Sally  
Camp worked in a community-based  
health clinic, in  
hospitals, and  
for the Virginia  
Department of  
Public Health.  
Her training is  
in hospital ad-  
ministration.*





# Healing

Paula Burtness, Mary Johnson, Keith Sehnert

**D**orothy felt herself trying desperately to climb out of the soft, floating chasm that surrounded her. She must get out, make it to the top. She must find out now whether there was hope for a cure. She knew the percentages were in her favor—the doctor had said so: “There’s a 75 percent chance of a total cure.” She just had to know which side of the fence she was on. That familiar companion, fear, reared its foreboding head once more as she struggled to come out of the anesthesia.

As she forced her eyes open, she found herself surrounded by loving familiar faces—smiling faces, though spent with relief. Could it be that she was one of the 75 percent? She singled out her doctor among the group, and he told her confidently, “Yes, they got all the cancer.” She was filled with thankfulness.

In the days that followed her surgery, Dorothy found herself deeply involved in a process that she hadn’t really been prepared for. Because her cancer was of the sigmoid colon, surgery was necessary to completely remove the lower part of the colon and form an alternative method of eliminating digestive waste products—a colostomy. This, along with the pain, nausea and weakness she felt, made her wonder if the “cure” was really so wonderful after all. Her life, as she

had known it, was changed forever.

Dorothy was knee-deep in healing and she realized how much har

**The pain, nausea  
and weakness  
she felt made her  
wonder if the “cure”  
was really so  
wonderful after all.**

work was ahead of her. She needed to learn how to manage her pain, how to build up her strength, how to take care of her colostomy, and how to cope with this life-changing experience in a positive way. She realized that even though the doctor had pronounced her cured, he hadn’t said that she was healed. There was a difference.

*Curing* and *healing* are often interrelated and complementary. It is important to realize, however, that they are not the same process. Healing and curing have different meanings when examined against a view of the whole person as body, mind,

**Healing and curing  
have different  
meanings when  
examined against a  
view of the whole  
person as body,  
mind and spirit.**

spirit. Curing and healing do not  
sarily occur at the same time.  
ring often happens by processes  
d personal control. Dorothy's  
ry is a prime example. Her par-  
tion was one of trusting the  
cian to do the job that needed  
done in the best way possible.  
ng, on the other hand, is a very  
nal process facilitated by faith,  
tive attitude, a sense of humor,  
oving relationships with others.  
aling can take place even when  
is unlikely. Wholeness—a har-  
of body, mind and spirit—can  
place even in those who are dy-  
n fact, many individuals come  
the dying process as a time of  
growth.  
are always in the process of  
g. How we choose to respond  
experiences influences our ca-

capacity to be healed. Will we respond with faith, with humor, with a positive outlook, or will we choose to be victims? In Romans 12:1-2, the apostle Paul suggests two ways that we can respond to the pressures of life: by conforming to the world or by being transformed by the renewal of our mind through Christ Jesus. God works to create a healing spirit that remolds us from within.

On June 5, 1989, four years after her first operation, Dorothy died of cancer. She had found great challenge in her experience with healing. Her active participation in the process made her ever mindful of the renewing and empowering presence of God. To be cured is a relief, but to be healed is to know God. ■

**Healing can  
take place even  
when a cure  
is unlikely.**

*Paula Burtness is a wife and mother who has had a lifelong interest in health issues. Mary Johnson, Ph.D., is a nursing professor at St. Olaf College; she has done extensive research on the subject of holistic health care. Keith W. Sehnert, M.D., P.A., is the author of books relating to selfcare and a practicing physician.*



**PEACE, LOVE  
AND HEALING**

**Peace, Love and Healing** by Bernie S. Siegel, M.D. (Harper and Row, 1989, \$18.95).

**I**n *Love, Medicine and Miracles* (1986), Dr. Bernie Siegel addressed those among his peers who seem so intent on curing the disease that they neglect the patient. He encouraged patients to participate in their recovery. In *Peace, Love and Healing*, Siegel focuses more directly on self-healing in conjunction with medical science.

You need not be sick to apply the book's techniques of relaxation, meditation, prayer, and visualization. They are equally effective in weight loss, stress relief, coping, etc. You will find the experiences related both astounding and uplifting. Christ came that we might have life and have it more abundantly—here is a path to help you accept Christ's gift!

*Inge Hughes  
Florham Park, New Jersey*



**THE RIGHT TO  
INNOCENCE**

**The Right to Innocence: Healing the Trauma of Childhood Sexual Abuse** by Beverly Engel (Jeremy Tarcher, 1989, \$17.95).

**T**he *Right to Innocence* is a compassionate and encouraging book for the adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and for those who seek to understand this cultural epidemic.

Beverly Engel, herself a survivor of sexual abuse, courageously shares her own story and reveals a seven-step recovery process to assist healing. She reminds the reader that sexual abuse is not "just a violation of the body, but of the mind and spirit as well."

For those who still suffer the anguish and secrecy of childhood sexual abuse or for those who even suspect they may have been abused, *The Right to Innocence* is a book to stimulate one on the way to awareness, recovery and wholeness. The book can also help those who seek to befriend, counsel or minister survivors of sexual abuse.

*Betty M. Everett  
Ferndale, Washington*





## LIFE IS GOODBYE, LIFE IS HELLO

**Life is Goodbye, Life is Hello** by  
Bozarth-Campbell (CompCare  
Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota,  
\$5, \$9.95).

**G**rief is a passion to endure.  
People can be stricken with it, vic-  
tims of it, stuck in it. Or they can  
survive it, get through it, and become  
victors through the active, hon-  
est and courageous process of griev-

ing. Bozarth-Campbell was one of  
the first women to be ordained in the  
Episcopal church. Her book should  
be read by everyone who has ever  
grieved, or who will ever grieve—in  
other words, all of us. The grieving  
process takes place in instances other  
than death, such as in other types  
of separation, sickness, loss of am-  
bition, even loss of freedom and pri-  
vacy due to parenting. Included are  
stories about grieving and styles of  
grieving.

The text is interspersed with  
her poems by the author. The sec-  
ond edition, published in 1986, adds  
a bibliography written six months after  
the sudden death of the author's  
husband. In describing her  
grief, she allows the reader to  
share a part of her own personal  
journey from despair to a greater un-  
derstanding of grieving. A bibliogra-  
phy of helpful resources is given.

*Rosemary Sinniger  
Pennington, New Jersey*



## WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE

**When Bad Things Happen to  
Good People** by Harold S. Kushner  
(Avon Books, 1983, \$3.95).

**R**abbi Harold Kushner wrote this  
book after the death of his young son,  
to provide comfort to others who suf-  
fer loss in their lives. First, the au-  
thor treats the question of why the  
righteous suffer by examining com-  
mon consolations like "It was God's  
will," "Good will win out in the end"  
and "It's a test." He then carefully  
refutes each of these statements by  
using case studies drawn from his  
years as a rabbi. Over and over, the  
author encourages the reader who  
has suffered not to ask why the mis-  
fortune happened, but rather to fo-  
cus on the present and ask God for  
strength and courage.

*Nancy Jentsch Enzweiler  
Melbourne, Kentucky*



## SECOND OPINION: HEALTH, FAITH, AND ETHICS

**Second Opinion: Health, Faith,  
and Ethics—The Church's Chal-  
lenge in Health**, Volume 13, March  
1990 (see order information below).

**G**lobally, thousands of today's  
children are being born into the 16th  
century—that is, they will live ab-  
breviated lives without modern med-  
ical care.

That is just one of the startling facts that emerged from "Striving for Fullness of Life: The Church's Challenge in Health," a Wheat Ridge Foundation-Carter Center Symposium, held in Atlanta, Georgia, last year.

The March 1990 issue of *Second Opinion*, a journal of the Park Ridge Center, includes highlights of major presentations by C. Everett Koop, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, Lutheran church historian Martin E. Marty, and others.

It also contains a case study of one congregation's experience with health-related support groups.

Single copies of March 1990 *Second Opinion* are available for \$7.00 from Wheat Ridge, 104 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

*Phyllis N. Kersten*  
Forest Park, IL



## A GRIEF OBSERVED

**A Grief Observed** by C. S. Lewis  
(Bantam, 1976, \$3.95).

**I**n *A Grief Observed*, C. S. Lewis shares his grief over the death of his wife. Comparing himself to an amputee, he feels he will no longer ever be whole again.

At times the reader becomes angry with Lewis, for he seems to forget so easily the promises of God, yet one realizes that his anger is saving him. It is the anger and lashing out at God that are Lewis's way of coming to terms with the grief in his life. By the end of the book, there is cathartic relief, and he speaks of a peace—the peace his wife felt at her death.

This book will minister to the grieving, for it expresses thoughts which the suffering person may not be able to. Lewis's frankness will bring a growth of faith for those dealing with the burden of death.

*Dianne Ellingson*  
Baker, Oregon



## MINDING THE BODY, MENDING THE MIND

**Minding the Body, Mending the Mind** by Joan Borysenko (Bantam 1988, \$8.95).

**T**he chapters of this well-written book parallel the program of the Mind/Body Clinic at Harvard Medical School. The book focuses on how negative thinking can often lead to stress and physical illness. Then it examines the medical basis and practical methods for changing our thinking to help restore the body and mind to wholeness and peace.

With warmth, genuine concern and clarity, Dr. Borysenko integrates her scientific knowledge, her personal history, and her patients' histories of change to affirm that change is indeed possible for us.

Unlike the promise of many self-help books for quick, easy results, this book, in its depth and honesty, inspires us to embark on "the journey of healing." ■

*Stephanie Strickman*  
Los Osos, California

# Small Steps

Mary R. Schramm

que wastepaper baskets, if they exist, are difficult to find. Our throwaway society is a fairly recent phenomenon. Much of our waste is the result of a society that worships the god of convenience. We continue to create and consume products that feed our addictive throwaway habit. The change has been small, subtle life-style changes that created many of our environmental and pollution problems, so it makes sense that small life-style steps can begin to reclaim resources and heal our environment. The step is too small to take. Here are some simple first ones:

**Become earth literate:** Learn how your life-style contributes to the health of God's creation. Accept responsibility for those things you can live differently or do without.

**Recycle:** That is, think before you buy. For example, a tube of lipstick I saw recently in the store came in a plastic case with two tops—one opaque, the other see-through. This was glued onto a piece of cardboard and sealed with more plastic. If the packaging for such an item or for other food purchases cannot be recycled, then precycle. Don't buy it. If you must, write to the manufacturer, ask for the product and state why you are not buying it.)

**Precycle:** No need to be embarrassed that one corner of your kitchen or hallway has "unsightly" bags of aluminum, glass and paper, for signs—to yourself and others—

that you care for the earth. If we all recycled our Sunday newspapers, we could save over 500,000 trees each week. And making aluminum from recycled cans uses 90 percent less energy than making the product from scratch. If your community has no recycling program, work to get one started!

The statesman and orator Edmund Burke (1729-1797) once noted, "Nobody made a greater mistake than the one who did nothing because he [or she] could only do a little." God called creation good. Let us add our small steps to the steps of others to reclaim that good creation. ■

*Mary Schramm, a consultant for LWT's "Earthcare," manages St. Martin's Table in Minneapolis, a peace education center and bookstore/restaurant.*

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## Book suggestions

**50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth** (Earthworks Press, 1989, \$4.95, Box 25, 1400 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709, or call 415-841-5866).

**Save Our Planet: 750 Everyday Ways You Can Help Clean Up the Earth** by Diane MacEachern (Dell, 1989, \$9.95).

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# Breath of the Holy Spirit

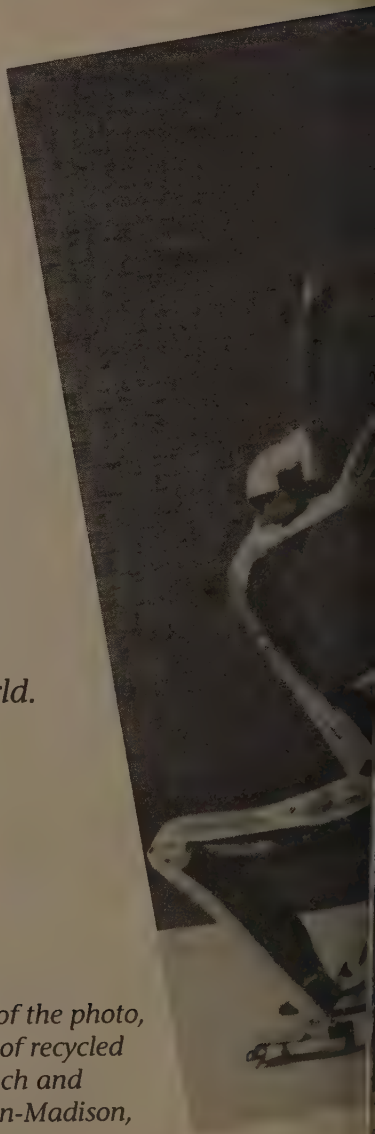
Cindy Mickelson

*There is Life,  
breath of the Holy Spirit  
shining new in the sun  
as shape, as form of God,  
hope of a new "again,"  
a new cycle.*

*There is Joy,  
breath of the Holy Spirit  
celebrating source of treasure  
as shape, as form of God,  
again and again  
a new creation.*

*There is Beauty,  
breath of the Holy Spirit,  
and beauty can mend the world.*

*Rebeka Martensen, creator and subject of the photo,  
is soaring alongside a sculpture formed of recycled  
car fenders. Martensen is studying French and  
journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison,  
and will graduate in December.*





## Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Groenewold

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### Conference ties faith to creation

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Concern for the equality of all, for the land, for peace, for the poor and for all of creation prompted an ecumenical recommitment to God's covenant earlier this year. Nearly 800 people from 100 countries spent eight days in Seoul, South Korea, meeting and discussing the theme, "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation." The World Council of Churches called the conference.

*Creator God, forgive us for our failures in caring for your creation. Awaken in us a new sense of accountability.*

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### ELCA joins churches to support U.S. policy in Middle East

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The ELCA is one of 12 church groups that joined with the National Council of Churches to support peace in the Middle East. The umbrella organization, Churches for Middle East Peace, wrote to President George Bush praising administration efforts to pull Israelis and Palestinians together for negotiations. The letter supported Bush's statements that resettling Soviet Jews in the occupied territories is counterproductive to the peace process, while at the same time recognizing the human need of resettlement.

*Loving Lord, help us to work for peace at home and in all parts of your creation.*

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### ELCA program forges partnerships

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The Companion Synod program of the ELCA Division for Global Mission joins synods and international church partners in reciprocal relationships that focus on persons rather than financial, ties.

*Remind us, Lord, that relationships are a two-way street. Teach us to receive and learn, as well as to give and teach.*

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### Lutheran volunteers help create just world

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Celebrating its 10th year of ministry, the Lutheran Volunteer Corps in Washington, D.C., helps those in need by providing shelter, counseling, health care and education. Volunteers work on public education, advocacy and community organizing. They address issues of hunger, disarmament, racism, the environment and sanctuary for refugees.

*Bless these volunteers, grace them, God, and make them a blessing to others.*

Let the local, national and international news provide you with material to build a daily prayer list.

*Sonia C. Groenewold is news editor of The Lutheran.*



# promises, PROMISES

Linda Woods Peterson



nd's  
chasing  
wer frees  
to see  
vertising  
mises  
what  
y are.

**I**f you are an average North American, you will spend one-and-one-half years of your life watching TV commercials. But if you're Lutheran, a recent study suggests, you may be "above average." Lutherans watch TV more than the average person, according to this research. So we see more commercials, too.

Advertisers spend over 100 billion dollars each year to attract our attention. Two thousand ads per person per day are seen, heard or sniffed—often without conscious thought or effort on our part.

Stop. Look around you. Listen. How many ads surround you? Perhaps a pen lying nearby bears a company logo. Is the radio selling a product or service between news stories and music? Is there a magazine open to an ad? Maybe a department store bill in today's mail contains a "scratch-and-sniff" or perfumed ad. Are you wearing an item of clothing that sports a label for all to see? Consider the mini-blinds at your window, the figurine on a shelf, the coffee in the cup—even without seeing the manufacturer's name, you may think "Levolor, Hummel, Maxwell House. . . ." The tune you hum may be a jingle bringing back the lyrics "I'd like to buy the world a Coke," or "You deserve a break today." If the TV set is on in the background, well . . . you get the idea.

Take a moment to jot down here some of the obvious

and not-so-obvious ads surrounding you:

What does your list look like? How different would it be if you moved to another location, another room? How would your list change if you wrote it while traveling by car? Airplane? Bus? Train? Bicycle?

**T**hink of your last trip to the grocery store. What products do you buy regularly?

What brand names come to mind? Advertisers want us to remember their product. They use graphics in their ads and packaging that will catch our eye. Their clever phrases arrest our attention. From the advertiser's point of view, it doesn't really matter whether we like the ad or not; as long as we remember the name, we continue to choose the product. A constant battle for shelf space wages in the stores. The winner is the brand most remembered, most purchased.

But what do we buy? Take breakfast cereal, for example. Two products may be equally nutritious, but we choose one. Why? Advertisers have built an image, an aura around the product, creating a value beyond the item. We choose one because it comes with the promise of health, or long life. Ads may convey loving relationships around the breakfast table, or the satisfaction of stopping for a healthy breakfast after climbing a

mountain. When we buy a product it comes with an image. We put that image in our shopping cart and we now "belong." The image becomes a part of our own sense of self. I eat \_\_\_\_\_, therefore I am \_\_\_\_\_. I wear \_\_\_\_\_, therefore I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Advertisers use mass media to reach us with their messages. The mass media in our culture can't provide us with news, information and entertainment unless they can deliver us—the audience—to the advertiser. Our attention is being bought and sold. The value of our attention is related directly to our purchasing power.

The term "psychographic sales" refers to a new way of putting us all

**When we buy a product,  
it comes with an image.**

**We put that image in  
our shopping cart and  
we now "belong."**

---

boxes, then labelling each box according to potential buying power worth. According to this scheme, attention of an "Actualizer" is worth more than that of a "Struggler."

"Actualizers" are defined by advertisers as status-oriented, successful, sophisticated, take-charge people with a taste for the finer things in life.

"Strugglers," according to advertisers, are also status-oriented, they are chronically poor and poorly educated, with low-level skills and weak social bonds.

Between these extremes, marketing professionals place six other categories of people—"Fulfillers, Achievers, Experiencers, Believers, Strivers, Makers"—all of whom are subject to being motivated by status, principles or action. Best-loved by advertisers are those motivated by status. Such people find "more" and "better" products appealing. But advertisers continue to design clever and successful appeals for all the types.

Our consumption of goods and services is the financial base of a vast media industry. A study made among salespeople in the United States showed that almost nine out of ten interviewed considered advertising an effective tool to persuade us to buy things we don't need. Fifty-one percent of the salespeople said advertising helps sell goods to people who didn't want to buy until they saw the ad. Their motto might be "Think Less, Buy More!"

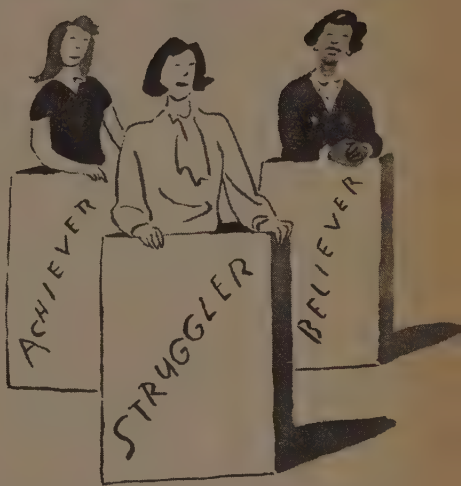
How did we get into this predicament?

**D**uring the 1940s the United States' gross national product rose by more than 400 percent. Automation provided standardized products which were more or less identical. So, on the one hand, we had more money to spend, and on the other, we had an abundant "choice" of products to purchase. Yet these so-called choices were often among products with only cosmetic differences.

So market research developed images around the products. One cola may taste like another. It may not matter to us which one we drink, but to the company producing them, it matters a great deal.

Enter the promises: promises of good looks, fashionable clothes, sum-

**The term "psychographic sales" refers to a new way of putting us all in boxes and labelling each box according to potential buying power.**



mer breezes, worldwide peace, beautiful scenes of a healthy environment, surrounded by laughing, smiling friends. Advertising sells a reassurance of worth when we feel worthless, a sense of power when we feel powerless. Youth and immortality are sold to us while we age. Sexuality, warmth, security, a sense of belonging—these are the promises. But the promises are empty. When the product runs out, we feel even more inadequate.

In our worship, we confess ourselves to be sinful and unclean, inadequate in "thought, word and deed." We confess that we believe we are saved from our inadequacies—by



a purchase made for us—a gift from God sealed by Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. All we need do is claim the gift.

And as we claim that gift, we are loved as we are, forgiven of our foolishness, and worthy of the name "Child of God." God's purchasing power frees us to see advertising promises for what they are. ■

*Linda Woods Peterson, Chicago, is a free-lance communicator and member of the Media and Values speakers team. This is the second article in her three-part LWT series.*



## Discussion ideas for a group . . .

**1 Collect from magazines and newspapers** ads and clippings related to health. A good example of where news meets advertising is the subject of cholesterol. New products were developed, and familiar products changed their image to address this health concern. How has this health issue affected you? Have you followed the news stories on this issue? Have you made purchases based on the health-related promises of advertising?

**2 Bring examples of ads which separate people into body parts**—legs, eyes, smiles, hair—any ad which “dismembers” the whole body. You might make a collage of these ads at your next meeting. What reactions do you have when you see people divided into parts? Do ads treat men and women differently? Give reasons for your answer.

**3 What about yourself would you change if you could?** God looks at creation and sees “good”; we look and so often see things we want to change. Discuss how we can regain our sense of wholeness when much of advertising seems to emphasize only “improvable parts.”

**4 Aliens have landed and are watching TV.** They believe they can learn what human beings are like by observing advertising on TV. What will the visual, musical and audio messages in the ads tell the aliens about what human beings believe?

**5 On newsprint make a list of “Words to Live By.”** Use two columns, one reflecting words to live by according to advertising, the second column reflecting words we live by as Christians. Discuss the confusion that can take place between the two lists.

# SCHOLARSHIPS

feel very blessed to be able to pursue my educational goals at this time in my life and in the life of my family. Surely the Women of the ELCA have been part of that blessing. May God continue to bless you in your efforts (help) others." This thank-you from one of the 1990 Women of the ELCA scholarship recipients pays tribute to the generosity and foresight of all the women who established scholarship funds to assist women in completing their education and realizing their potential.

In 1991, Women of the ELCA will again grant scholarship awards to approximately 20 mature Lutheran women. Criteria for these scholarships are that: 1. applicants must be *ELCA laywomen*; 2. applicants must have *interrupted their education* for at least two years at some time since high school; 3. applicants must have *demonstrable financial need* and *Christian commitment*; 4. applicants must be *enrolled* or have been *admitted to*, an educational program.

Of the two hundred women who applied for scholarships in 1990, approximately one in ten received a scholarship award. Grants ranged from \$1,000 to \$2,000. About 25 percent of the applicants did not meet one or more criteria or did not submit

complete information, and their applications were not considered.

The scholarship committee looks for evidence of a carefully planned academic program, for references which document academic ability and Christian commitment, and for a sense that the applicant will have the opportunity and the perseverance to realize her goals. The committee also considers geographic distribution so that, if possible, scholarships will be awarded to women from all nine regions of the church. In addition, more than half of the scholarships are restricted to specific fields of study or carry other designations. For example, one scholarship is for graduate study only, another is for a missionary or someone preparing to enter this field, and several are for women preparing for careers in the health professions.

Applications and all supporting materials are due in the Women of the ELCA office by March 1, 1991. Application forms and guidelines will be available only after October 15. To obtain an application, write to:

## SCHOLARSHIPS

Women of the ELCA

8765 West Higgins Road

Chicago, Illinois 60631-4189



## God, Do You Know?

Lodene Brown Hathaway

God, I am here. I am growing old.

Aging has no gentle reminders. Suddenly, it seems, age is all over me—in my aloneness, in my limitations, in my forgetting, in subtle shiverings like those caused when an icy hand touches me. I push open doors at a nursing home each week to face the myriad shapes of age and try to come to terms with each, not knowing which shape one day, may be mine.

God, you don't know personally about growing old, do you? You are forever. And your son died at 33, in the youth of his life. Jesus looked on the old with compassion, showed mercy and healed, but was he—are you—able to get inside the warped and suffering bodies? Did he—did you—identify with them so completely that you hurt as they did? Please understand me. You know our minds, the maze of thinking that gets so jumbled, the many messages we hear “prepare,” “relax,” “don't do,” “stay active,” “wait,” “get involved,” and the most painful of all, “where is your faith?”

Where is my faith? It isn't a “where”; it isn't even mine because it is all the meanings fed into the hopper of my experience. These must sift to find the kernel, that, when nourished, will yield for my recognition of your constant caring. I have questions, Lord. And doubts that keep creeping in with their “impossibles.”

Inside the real me is an abundant love for people, for hours spent with books, with writing, with music, hours that are so terribly important. Lord, are these your times? Am I closer to you than I realize in just such moments as these? Why do I, then, still challenge others to prove what they believe by blurting out my own inner wonderings in some sort of wild hope that you may reply with a magic word? I continue to negate the possibility of you even when achingly aware of a need so great that nothing else matters—nothing other than knowing that you are, that I am loved by you, and that you accept me, doubts and all.

So, God, here I am, blundering, challenging, and hoping. One day perhaps, I will be able to push aside all dark curtains of doubt and face faith's light with trust. Until then, Lord, don't give up on me. Amen. ■

*Lodene Hathaway, a former school teacher and church school worker, is a free-lance writer and member of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cobleskill, New York.*



# GMCs



ere aren't enough  
s for a full loan," the  
r said.

y heart sank. Ever  
the landlord said he  
selling my place, my  
had been in turmoil.  
nds encouraged me  
y rather than rent.

appointing series of  
e-hunting forays followed—  
imply gave up, certain I couldn't  
d to own anything.

en things changed. Unexpected  
s became available. A town-  
e that met my criteria—and  
—was for sale. Low-interest  
loan funds were released in  
ed amount just when I decided  
y.

en the caller's disheartening  
Still, somehow, I was confi-  
Buying seemed to be God's plan

for me, I thought—or  
why had I been led this  
far?

I have seen God active  
in my life, and in the lives  
of other people, perform-  
ing GMCs—"God-mas-  
tered coincidences"—  
leading and guiding all  
the while, through the  
downs and through the ups.

Now in my new home, I thank you,  
God, for your active presence, your  
goodness. Thank you for the mort-  
gage officer who went the second  
mile to pull together remaining loan  
funds from several sources to make  
enough for mine. Thank you for your  
intervention, your guidance, your  
"GMC." Open our eyes to see you ac-  
tive in our lives. ■

*Sonia C. Groenewold*

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I came that they may have life,  
and have it abundantly.

*John 10:10b*



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